

Outreach Team Meeting Agenda and Notes

April 14, 2021 6:00 –7:30 PM

ZOOM Meeting

1. Welcome & Introductions

Participants: Twelve members of the Outreach Team were present

Staff: Eight members from the City-County Planning Department were present

2. What's Next Update

Goals and Objectives Update:

- Our team has made revisions to the Community Guiding Values, Goals and Objectives based on input that we gathered from you, Engagement Ambassador sessions, our online engagement platform: Social Pinpoint, and staff and shared them with you all at the beginning of this month.
- Our team has shared an English and Spanish news post with links to the revised Community Goals and Objectives and side-by-side comparison documents, showing the draft version of the goals and objectives next to the new, revised ones.
 - English News Post: <https://engagedurham.com/comprehensive-plan-april-2021-project-updates-2/>
 - Spanish News Post: <https://engagedurham.com/plan-integral-abril-2021-actualizaciones-del-proyecto-2/>
- Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on April 27th at 5:30 PM for the revised Community Goals and Objectives. Our team shared an update with the Planning Commission on March 9 as an informational item only. We shared the link to the presentation if you are interested in watching.
- After the Planning Commission makes an advisory vote, the background on the goals and objectives will be presented to the City Council at their June 10 Work Session and Board of County Commissioners at their June 7 Work Session as an informational presentation item. Then, on June 15 at 6:00 PM, there will be a special joint meeting with City Council and Board of County Commissioners for public hearing to consider adopting the Community Goals and Objectives.
- **We will send out reminders for these upcoming meetings and would love to have you participate! Updates can be found on the website as well so please share with others who are interested:**
 - English: https://engagedurham.com/adoption_process/
 - Spanish: <https://engagedurham.com/adoption-process-spa/>

Southeast Durham Focus Area (SEDFA) Update:

- We have shared out a news post and a link to visit Social Pinpoint, our online engagement platform, for the Southeast Durham Focus Area piece of the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Southeast Durham Focus Area engagement opportunity is open until April 30:

- English <https://durham.mysocialpinpoint.com/comprehensiveplan>
- Spanish <https://durham.mysocialpinpoint.com/comprehensiveplan-espanol>

Background:

- This area is bounded by Sherron Road, Highway 98, Carpenter Pond Rd, and U.S. Highway 70, and is primarily the area to be served by the city’s new Southeast Regional Lift Station – a type of sewer infrastructure. The purpose of this engagement work is to understand community needs and priorities for this area so we can develop new future land use designations that are consistent with what the community wants to see from the draft goals and objectives for the Comprehensive Plan.
- We’ve been asked by City Council to move this piece of the Comprehensive Plan work along more quickly due to the volume of cases coming to City Council from this area.
- Please help us share this opportunity and your perspectives on this area. Additionally we’d also love your suggestions on how to improve our use of this tool to continue engaging residents around the whole County on land use. We’ll be doing map-based engagement for much of the rest of the Comprehensive Plan development. Please let us know your thoughts on how we can improve!
- Our team will be finishing up engagement and drafting recommendations for this part of the Comprehensive Plan and will begin presenting the final recommendations to Planning Commission, City Council, and Board of Commissioners in September.

Upcoming Work:

- Once the goals and objectives have been approved, our team will begin the Policy and Future Land Use Mapping work for the plan.
- We are currently thinking through ideas of how we will carry this work out, so more information will be coming soon!

Questions and Discussion:

- OT Member – People in this Southeast Durham corridor are not happy and are organized to fight every project. There are infrastructure concerns and oftentimes development goes in near historical properties with no consideration. There are also flooding, environmental, and infrastructure issues. Industrial development/planning occurs without information on what that industrial is. There are trucks on narrow roads, no sidewalks, lots of traffic, and no affordable housing. Durham housing starts at \$200k. The statement “someone making \$50k a year can afford a mortgage” is not correct. There will be a lot of push back for planning 400 homes near Red Mill road right near Falls Lake.
- OT Member – we just found out that Bragtown isn’t in the budget. Why are we doing EngageDurham if it’s not getting funding for things in the budget?
 - Staff clarified that Planning is and has often not been tied to budget and to implementation, but that we are trying to address that with the Comprehensive Planplan.
 - Staff presented to the Draft Annual Planning Department Work Plan to Planning Commission last night and also was asked to explain why Bragtown is not a separate line item on a small area plan. We are committed to working together with Bragtown and it is part of the Comprehensive Plan line item.

The purpose of the next section is to provide key information about land use planning as we transition to the next phase of the Comprehensive Plan - which will involve the creation of an updated map and also policies. The City-County Planning Department's Director and Assistant Director along with a member of the department's Land Use Team are with us to help provide an introduction to this information and answer questions you all may have about land use planning. **At this time, we are going to begin recording the meeting so that we may share this video with folks who were not able to attend this meeting and others who may have similar questions about land use!**

3. Land Use Introduction and Overview

- Staff introduced land use and talked about changes to the Land Use Team's engagement initiative.
 - The Land Use Team is moving towards a way to provide more transparency and center voices of the community in these processes. This is a one stop shop for resources and providing transparency for cases and proposals. The tool is where all cases for rezonings, zoning map changes, annexations, and Future Land Use Map changes are all in one place. The Land Use Team will bring community members in at the inception of projects all the way through the adoption process. This will no longer only be at public hearings, since there's so much expertise in this community. So, at each stage of the project, the tool will be updated to see how the proposal has changed based on their feedback, so residents can stay informed and engaged throughout the project.
 - Land Use Engagement Site: <https://durham.mysocialpinpoint.com/land-use>
 - We have heard that we need to be iterative and adaptable to community input that we are hearing so this will be updated through each stage of the project. This is a way to stay involved with a project from submittal to approval or denial. Staff needs to balance the rules that we have to comply with at State level, but also work within that to better meet the needs of residents.
 - The Land Use team suggests that the applicant look at and incorporate community comments and provide elected officials and the Planning Commission a report of what was heard from residents. The team will need to facilitate this information and ensure transparency for in-person meetings as well, once it is safe.
 - This is a good start for now. We will come back to this initiative tonight as we go through answering your questions. Tonight, we want to learn from y'all. We want to know what y'all don't know and would also like y'all to suggest ways to do things better and bring residents' voices into these land use projects. We are here to learn from you tonight and also help fill in missing information for you that we may not have done the best job of providing to you in the past.
- OT member - How are we getting information about the website out to everyone? Especially to people directly affected now.
 - Staff – We are open to ideas from this group. The Comprehensive Plan group has a great selection of mediums that we can use. Also, social media is an option and we have messaging that we will add to every neighborhood meeting that the applicant has to provide and talk about. We are working with the Neighborhood Improvement Services
- OT Member – How are you contacting these neighborhoods and what timeline are you using? Why not use the local news – not everyone is a computer lover.

- Staff – I think that is great feedback. We will also be working with our public affairs group to connect to news and radio outlets. We can also put a blurb in the Water Bill. Please share any other ideas that you may have.
- OT member – I don't get a water bill, but these are good ideas. Although, it will not capture everyone or as big a crowd. Will this be in Spanish?
 - Staff – The messaging is in Spanish and the site is translatable as well. We have EngageDurham messaging through the Durham Television Network which will include this initiative. There also might be a special opportunity to work with public affairs to get this information shared.
- OT Member – Not everyone has cable. There is a big group of people that you are going to be missing where you need to come up with some ideas.
- OT Member – We were using the library, but cannot do this during COVID.
 - Staff – That is a great point. We will be having these conversations in person post-pandemic. We are building the infrastructure now and are will be able to better understand who we are missing geographically.
- What about information Kiosks in those hard-to-reach areas?
 - Staff – That is a great idea and we are writing all of these down now.
- OT Member– Can we use text blasts? How can we connect people by phone to announcements?
 - Staff – This is something we need to work on. Participatory Budgeting has been able to send text messages to folks. The challenge is getting bite sized messages out.
- OT Member – I think the TV announcement idea is great. Some departments have mascots which show that a certain message is for that specific purpose and it catches your attention. Maybe we could help engage folks using a mascot. The one advertisement for waste water to not put grease down your sink is a great way of communicating to folks. It needs to be eye catching. Also, is there a way to partner with schools somehow to get the message across? Schools seem to be a gathering place which can get the message out.
- OT Member – How about using the tax system?
- OT Member - Who are the deciders of the huge build out at RTP? I was appalled at the development power point I saw and how it will contribute to the disparities we're seeing out there. Are people doing anything about this? I have been hearing about it from the sheriffs department who are being overwhelmed and blindsided by this. I'm not ok with it.
 - Staff – RTP has it's own special zoning and since it was envisioned as research and development park, it has its own special taxing district and different rules than the rest of the county. Staff is happy to look into it. RTP does have the ability to do a lot of things if they are following their zoning and enabling legislation. RTP has the ability to do a lot of development there. Please send me an email so we can connect on this.
- Staff- It may be helpful to segue to zoning and switched gears. How do zoning regulations work. Let's provide an overview on how zoning works in North Carolina.
 - Zoning is a designation applied to a piece of land that allows the person who owns or wants to build on it to do something by right. There is land designated residential, commercial, and office along with others. We have lots of designations in Durham. We have some special districts. These designations say what can be built, what developments can look like, what sounds they can make, height they can be, how far from road or stream they can be, what density is allowed - how close together structures are. That's essentially what zoning is. For

example, when you see single family home, it is probably zoned residential. We have a lot of different residential districts and rural has more acreage. Zoning is what is allowed where and what it looks like when it is built.

- Often, people have to get a building permit to build something and the development has to meet the building code. Zoning is taking a step back from that and considers where on the lot you can put the house, if can you have a house or does it have to be a factory (or some other use). Zoning sets the stage for what can be built in a specific area. NC jurisdictions can write their own rules and decide what the zoning designations are for an area, but they are limited by the State. Zoning is two parts: a written set of rules that we call the ordinance and a zoning map where we show where zoning goes. The zoning map and ordinance work together to pinpoint what can be built on a property.
- OT Member - How closely do you work with developers to decide whether zoning codes can change to meet what a developer wants or needs? Do you visit the property and get input from residents? It is important to hear stories of people who live here.
 - Staff – That is a great question. There is a legal framework that we need to follow. Once zoning is on the map and regulations are in place, then the developer can build by right. As long as they are following the rules, we cannot require them to do anything extra beyond the rules. The rules are adopted through a public process and there has to be a notice when the rules change. A site plan is a drawing that shows your piece of property and once we approve the site plan, there is not public engagement requirement.
 - If there is a property where developers want to build something that the zoning doesn't allow, then they need to change the zoning. This is where the Comprehensive Plan comes into play. When we get this request we pull up the plan and say what does it say should happen here? That is the guidance staff uses to give feedback to developers on whether their proposal is something in line with that plan or vision. We do go out to sites and take pictures. There area variety of departments, like public works, that review these sites with us. We look at the transportation infrastructure and flooding in the area.
 - Because the rezoning process are not an administrative process, City Council can make whatever decision they want, have a lot of negotiating power
- OT Member – The transportation department lies for the developer and minimizes accidents by saying there are not as many as their actually are. The transportation department downplays the number of pedestrian deaths on the highway. There are no sidewalks out in the rural area of Durham, so people have to walk along the highway. The numbers and statistics produced are a bunch of bull. You need to talk to the residents in the areas to get the real story. Developers blow the community off. None of that discretion goes towards the people who have to live with what is happening within their community. If there was more discretion is given to community members, then we wouldn't have this infrastructure problem. There is all this investment in sewer, but no thought has been given to improving the roads. A lot of people have and will continue to die on these roads. This area is not built for dense development. The developers are saying that there are so many people are coming to Durham and we need to provide housing. Yet other people are having to leave everyday because they cannot afford to stay. Companies are giving incentives to their employees to come here and our taxes are going to the new people. Our lives are being disrupted and put in harms way.

- Staff – These are the kind of insights that we don't get over an email so I appreciate hearing your perspective. I am hearing your frustrations. We would love to have the bandwidth to talk to residents for each case. A challenge we face is how do we meet state requirements while still trying to meet with the community. What do we do to improve our process? I am hearing some great ideas and am interested in hearing your ideas.
- OT Member- The Environmental Affairs Board has noted that the UDO doesn't really give a definition of what a neighborhood meeting IS, or how it should be run. That's something we'd like to change.
- OT Member – The community's voice needs to be heard. It is a matter of trying to find a way, everybody is feeling this heat and concern. People can see and understand the restrictions that come down from this legislature. We need to talk before the frustration that's building up. We see that developers don't care so we feel that the City and County do not care. For instance, the big development blocks on Geer street mean to me that they were put there to break that community. The people living here know what's going on. It feels like Durham is losing its character and is turning into a concrete city.
 - Staff - Staff is feeling this frustration too. The processes are stacked against residents and make it easy for development to happen. We are working on dismantling this process. We need residents to help us change the rules that are problematic.
- OT Member – People are frustrated and fed up because we are here, paying taxes, and doing whatever we and it feels like the City does not care.
- OT Member - It feels like the 20 and 30 year olds are the only ones that are being considered. They're not going to be here after school. Why do we need another apartment building if they cannot fill the ones we have right now? We need to focus on the true tax payers. It feels like we are being forgotten and not listened to. There are no checks and balances .
- OT Member- At what stage is the City Planning Commission involved?
 - Staff– At first the application is reviewed by planning staff to ensure the project complies with the ordinance. Once the staff suggestions and comments have been addressed, the project is placed on the Planning Commission agenda. Usually it takes about three reviews with a 90-day cycle in-between. Many applicants or developers are trying to engage the Planning Commissioners earlier in the process to see what the general impressions are.

4. Finishing up

- Notes from this discussion will be posted on the EngageDurham website as well as included in a meeting follow-up email
- During this month, our team is scoping out sections of upcoming work for the next phase of the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, we've been developing strategies for creating a place type guide and map (similar to the Future Land Use Map), Comprehensive Plan policies to supplement the map and guide, and metrics and indicators to measure and track the plan's progress. We are also scoping out our work with the Southeast Durham Focus Area and the Bragtown community. We will be talking through what's next for the Comprehensive Plan at our next meeting!
- Are there any other announcements the group would like to share?
 - NIS Community Stories on Merrick Moore coming up soon on Friday, April 30th at Noon

- Register here:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8e6_QclATfOz_KbOiu53Cw
 - Please note, you must register through Zoom in order to receive the link to join.
- BPAC subcommittees are spending time reviewing development plans with an eye towards access and equity. It's open to everyone and they provide feedback that is submitted to the Planning Commission. Ed can share information about when those subcommittees meet.
- Please let us know if you have any feedback/suggestions on how we can improve our communication with you all and facilitation of meetings.
- Thank you!